

Takemusu Iwama Aikido Europe

Grading Syllabus

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Takemusu Aikido

Aikido is a Japanese martial art founded by Morihei Ueshiba (O-Sensei). It's a discipline that focuses on blending with an opponent's movements to resolve conflict without relying on physical strength.

Takemusu or 'Iwama style' Aikido is the traditional form of Aikido as originally taught by O-Sensei and preserved through his student Morihiro Saito, 9th Dan Shihan in the small village of Iwama. It emphasizes strong foundations and balanced practice in both body techniques (Taijutsu) and weapons training (Bukiwaza), highlighting their close connection.

Takemusu Iwama Aikido Europe, founded by Tony Sargeant Shihan, continues this lineage. Sargeant Shihan has trained in Aikido since 1973, studying directly under Saito Shihan and earning his 5th Dan in 1994 at the Iwama dojo. He now holds the rank of 7th Dan and the title of Shihan.

Grading Format

Candidates will typically work with a single partner (for the first few grades), who may either be self-selected or assigned. The examiner will call out techniques by name, and the candidate must respond to their partner's attack. Techniques should be demonstrated on both the right and the left, as well as include relevant variations such as *omote* and *ura*.

Each grade builds upon the one before it, ensuring steady development of both physical and conceptual fundamentals. Students are expected to retain and refine material from earlier levels, particularly the foundational exercises **tai no henkō**, **morotedori kokyūhō**, and **kokyū dōsa**, which are practiced every training.

As students advance, evaluations focus less on memorized technique and more on embodying Aikido's core principles: relaxation, use of the hips, upright posture, proper connection, and situational awareness. Equally vital are the qualities of etiquette and spirit, which reflect a student's understanding of Aikido beyond the purely technical.

Grading Progression

Grades in Aikido start at 6th kyū (white belt) and work ‘backwards’ up to 1st kyū (brown belt) before becoming dan ranks, or ‘black belts’.

White & Yellow Belt (6th & 5th kyū grades)

These introductory grades focus on getting comfortable with Aikido practice and the grading process. Training centers on helping students establish basic movement & posture.

Orange & Green Belt (4th & 3rd kyū grades)

Students expand their repertoire with new attacks and defenses. They also begin learning longer jō forms and basic ken partner work.

Blue & Brown Belt (2nd & 1st kyū grades)

At these levels, students are expected to be able to demonstrate some techniques ‘ki no nagare’, or flowing. Weapons practice introduces paired ken and jo work.

Shōdan & Nidan (1st & 2nd degree black belt)

By black belt level, emphasis shifts from learning new material to demonstrating mastery. Exams are longer and more demanding, requiring clear, composed performance across a wide technical range within the dictation format.

Sandan & Yondan (3rd & 4th degree black belt)

These grades mark the culmination of formal training in Takemusu Aikido. Candidates present their own program, showcasing understanding, creativity, and personal expression through demonstration.

Godan & Beyond (5th degree black belt and beyond)

Grades continue beyond yondan, but progression reflects continued dedication to Aikido through teaching, leadership, and contribution to the art. This stage signals the transition from examinee to mentor, shaping the next generation of practitioners.

Rokkyū | 6th Kyū | White Belt

Requirements: 2 months / 15 sessions minimum training

Format: techniques dictated by examiner (15 mins max)

Notes: introduction to grading

Kihon Dōsa

Basic movements and exercises.

mae ukemi (*forward roll*)

tai sabaki (*body management*)

tai no henkō

Tachiwaza

Standing techniques. Attack type is given first, then the defensive technique, then any variations or detail.

<i>(attack)</i>	<i>(defence)</i>	<i>(detail)</i>
shomenuchi	ikkyō	omote ura
shomenuchi	kotegaeshi	

Bukiwaza

Weapon techniques. Can be either solo or paired, but start solo.

ken	suburi	1 - 3
jō	suburi	1 - 3

Gokiyū | 5th Kyū | Yellow Belt

Requirements: 3 months / 20 sessions since obtaining rokkyū

Format: techniques dictated by examiner (20 mins max)

Notes: examiners may also ask to see techniques from the rokkyū syllabus

Kihon Dōsa

morotedori kokyū hō

kokyū dōsa (*suwariwaza* or 'seated')

Suwariwaza

shomenuchi

ikkyō

omote | ura

Tachiwaza

shomenuchi

nikyō

omote | ura

sankyō

omote | ura

shomenuchi

shihōnage

omote | ura

iriminage

Bukiwaza

ken

suburi

4 & 5

jō

suburi

4 & 5

6 jo kata

Yonkyū | 4th Kyū | Orange Belt

Requirements: 4 months / 30 sessions since obtaining gokyū

Format: techniques dictated by examiner (25 mins max)

Notes: examiners may ask to see techniques from any previous grade

Kihon Dōsa

ushiro ukemi

shikkō

Suwariwaza

shomeuchi

nikyō

omote | ura

Tachiwaza

katatedori

ikkyō

omote | ura

nikyō

omote | ura

sankyō

omote | ura

yonkyō

omote | ura

katatedori

shihōnage

omote | ura

kotegaeshi

iriminage

jōdan | chūdan | gedan

Bukiwaza

ken

suburi

6 & 7

awase

migi & hidari

jō

suburi

6 - 10

31 kata

1 - 12

Sankyū | 3rd Kyū | Green Belt

Requirements: 6 months / 40 sessions since obtaining yonkyū

Format: techniques dictated by examiner (25 mins max)

Notes: yokomenuchi shihōnage, kotegaeshi, & iriminage are expected to 'ki no nagare'

Suwariwaza

shomenuchi	sankyō	omote ura
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Tachiwaza

yokomenuchi	ikkyō	omote ura
	nikyō	omote ura
	sankyō	omote ura
	yonkyō	omote ura
	gokyō	

yokomenuchi	shihōnage	omote ura
	kotegaeshi	
	iriminage	

kosadori	shihōnage	omote ura
	kotegaeshi	
	iriminage	

Bukiwaza

ken	happōgiri	
	awase	go & shichi
jō	suburi	11 - 20
	31 kata	1 - 31

Nikyū | 2nd Kyū | Blue Belt

Requirements: 9 months / 50 sessions since obtaining sankyū

Format: techniques dictated by examiner (30 mins max)

Notes: candidates should be prepared to show techniques 'ki no nagare'

Suwariwaza

katatedori	ikkyō	omote ura
	nikyō	omote ura
	sankyō	omote ura

Tachiwaza

katadori	ikkyō	omote ura
	nikyō	omote ura
	sankyō	omote ura
	yonkyō	omote ura

tsuki	rokkyō	
	shihōnage	omote ura
	kotegaeshi	
	iriminage	

katatedori	kaitenage	uchi soto mawari
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Bukiwaza

tantōdori	tsuki tsuki yokomenuchi	rokkyō kotegaeshi gokyō
ken	kumitachi	1 & 2 (kihon)
jō	happōtsuki	
	31 kumijō	sections 1 - 3, 4 - 6

Ikkyū | 1st Kyū | Brown Belt

Requirements: 12 months / 75 sessions since obtaining nikyū

Format: techniques dictated by examiner (30 mins max)

Notes: candidates should be prepared to show techniques 'ki no nagare'

Suwariwaza

ryotedori	ikkyō	omote ura
	nikyō	omote ura
	sankyō	omote ura

Tachiwaza

ryotedori	ikkyō	omote ura
	nikyō	omote ura
	sankyō	omote ura
	yonkyō	omote ura

ryotedori	shihōnage	omote ura
	kotegaeshi	
	iriminage	

tsuki **kaitenage**

shomenuchi **koshinage**

ryokatadori **kokyūnage** jiyuwaza: 2 uke

Bukiwaza

bukidori **tachidori** 3 techniques

ken **kumitachi** 3 - 5 (kihon)

jō **13 kata**

31 kumijō sections 7 - 11, 13 - 17

Shōdan | 1st Degree Black Belt

Requirements: 12 months / 100 sessions since obtaining ikkyū

Format: techniques dictated by examiner (40 mins max)

Notes: candidates should be prepared to demonstrate anything from the previous grades in a clear 'kihon' fashion

Hanmi-handachiwaza

katatedori	shihōnage	omote ura
shomenuchi	iriminage	

Tachiwaza

ushiro ryotedori	ikkyō	omote ura
	nikyō	omote ura
	sankyō	omote ura
ushiro ryotedori	kotegaeshi	
	iriminage	
katatedori	koshinage	
yokomenuchi	kokyūnage	3 henka
ryokatadori	kokyūnage	jiyuwaza: 3 uke

Bukiwaza

bukidori	jōdori	3 techniques
ken	kumitachi	1 - 5 (nagare)
	kimusubi no tachi	
jō	31 kumijō	all sections

Nidan | 2nd Degree Black Belt

Requirements: 18 months / 200 sessions since obtaining shodan

Format: techniques dictated by examiner (40 mins max)

Notes: candidates should be prepared to demonstrate anything from the syllabus so far in a flowing or 'nagare' fashion

Tachiwaza

morotedori	iriminage	2 henka
morotedori	koshinage	4 henka
yokomenuchi	kokyunage	jiyuwaza: 2 uke
katatedori	kokyunage	jiyuwaza: 2 uke

Bukiwaza

bukidori	jō-nage	3 techniques
ken	kumitachi	2 henka each
jō	10 kumijō	

Sandan | 3rd Degree Black Belt

Requirements: 24 months / 300 sessions since obtaining nidan

Format: demonstration (20 mins max)

Candidates will organise a demonstration that includes a wide variety of techniques. Here are a few example focus areas, but this should be discussed with the examiner ahead of time:

Breadth - show a wide range of material

Structure - arrange a clear and coherent demo

Demonstration Format

Techniques demonstrated may include anything from previous grades and may be shown in a number of sections, i.e.

- Ki no nagare techniques against a single uke
- Jiyuwaza against simple attacks from multiple uke
- Paired bukiwaza forms
- Bukidori against single or multiple uke

Additional Content

The following content is included for the sake of completeness, and encouraged for this demo.

Tachiwaza

ninindori

Bukiwaza

13 jō awase/kumijo

Yondan | 4th Degree Black Belt

Requirements: 36 months / 400 sessions since obtaining sandan

Format: demonstration (20 mins max)

Candidates will organise a demonstration that includes a wide variety of techniques. Here are a few example focus areas, but this should be discussed with the examiner ahead of time:

Transformation - allow techniques to change as needed

Presence - keep calm and connected throughout

Demonstration Format

Techniques demonstrated may include anything from previous grades and any other techniques not listed in previous grades (tenchinage, juji garame etc) and may be shown in a number of sections, i.e.

- Ki no nagare techniques against a single uke
- Jiyuwaza against simple attacks from multiple uke
- Paired bukiwaza forms
- Bukidori against single or multiple uke

Additional Content

The following content is included for the sake of completeness, and encouraged for this demo.

Tachiwaza

henkawaza

kaeshiwaza

Bukiwaza

7 kentaijō

Grading Matrix Part I.

Tachiwaza									
	shomen uchi	katate dori	kosadori	yokomen uchi	katadori	tsuki	ryotedori	ushiro ryotedori	morote dori
ikkyō	6th kyū	4th kyū		3rd kyū	2nd kyū		1st kyū	1st dan	
nikyō	5th kyū	4th kyū		3rd kyū	2nd kyū		1st kyū	1st dan	
sankyō	5th kyū	4th kyū		3rd kyū	2nd kyū		1st kyū	1st dan	
yonkyō		4th kyū		3rd kyū	2nd kyū		1st kyū	1st dan	
gokyō				3rd kyū					
rokkyō						2nd kyū			
shihōnage	5th kyū	4th kyū	3rd kyū	3rd kyū		2nd kyū	1st kyū		
kotegaeshi	6th kyū	4th kyū	3rd kyū	3rd kyū		2nd kyū	1st kyū	1st dan	
iriminage	5th kyū	4th kyū	3rd kyū	3rd kyū		2nd kyū	1st kyū	1st dan	2nd dan
kaitennage		2nd kyū				1st kyū			
koshinage	1st kyū	1st dan							2nd dan
kokyūnage				1st dan					

Grading Matrix Part II.

Suwariwaza			
	shomenuchi	katatedori	ryotedori
ikkyō	5th kyū	2nd kyū	1st kyū
nikyō	4th kyū	2nd kyū	1st kyū
sankyō	3rd kyū	2nd kyū	1st kyū

Hanmi Handachi Waza		
	shomenuchi	katatedori
shihōnage		1st dan
iriminage	1st dan	

Bukiwaza								
	6th kyū	5th kyū	4th kyū	3rd kyū	2nd kyū	1st kyū	1st dan	2nd dan
ken suburi	1 - 3	4 & 5	6 & 7	happōgiri				
ken awase & kumitachi			migi & hidari	go & shichi	kumitachi 1&2	kumitachi 3-5	nagare & kimusubi	henka
jō suburi	1 - 3	4 & 5	6 - 10	11 - 20	happōtsuki			
jō kata		6 kata	31: 1 - 12	31		13		
kumijō					31: 1 - 6	31: 9 - 17	31	10
bukidori					tantōdori	tachidori	jōdori	jōnage

Glossary

The following glossary is not intended as a complete list of terms used in aikido; only as a complete list of terms used in this grading syllabus.

Attacks

Japanese	English	Explanation
katadori	shoulder grab	one-hand grab to the shoulder
katatedori	one-hand grab	opposite wrist grab (right to left)
kōsadori	cross-hand grab	grabbing same wrist (right to right)
morotedori	two-hand grab	both hands grabbing one forearm
ryōkatadori	two-shoulder grab	both shoulders grabbed simultaneously
ryōtedori	two-hand grab	both wrists grabbed simultaneously
shōmenuchi	front strike	downward strike to the head
tsuki	thrust	straight punch or stab
ushiro ryōtedori	rear two-hand wrist grab	both wrists grabbed from behind
yokomenuchi	side strike	strike to the side of the head or neck

Defences

gokyō	fifth teaching	variation of ikkyō, often used against tantō attacks
ikkyō	first teaching	basic arm control leading uke to the mat
iriminage	entering throw	throw executed by entering close and off-balancing uke
kaitennage	rotary throw	circular rotation throw using uke's extended arm
kokyūnage	breath throw	throw using blending and timing rather than joint locks
koshinage	hip throw	throw using hips as leverage
kotegaeshi	wrist-turn throw	wrist rotation throw causing uke to fall
nikyō	second teaching	wrist lock causing rotation and control
rokkyō	sixth teaching	straight-arm control technique
sankyō	third teaching	rotational wrist control leading uke off balance
shihōnage	four-direction throw	throw executed with movement like a sword cut
yonkyō	fourth teaching	arm control with pressure on the forearm nerve

General

awase	blending	harmonizing with a partner's movement or energy
bukidori	weapon taking	disarming techniques against armed attacks
bukiwaza	weapon techniques	training with weapons such as ken, jō, or tantō
chūdan	middle level	mid-level target area (torso)
dan	grade	black belt grade such as shōdan refers to a formal action or exercise
dōsa	movement	
gedan	lower level	low-level target area (below waist)
hanmi	half-standing	one person kneeling, the other standing
handachi waza	techniques	
happōgiri	eight-direction cut	eight directional cutting exercise
happōtsuki	eight-direction thrust	eight directional thrusting exercise
henka	variation	modified or alternate form of a technique or kata
henkawaza	variation techniques	changing one technique into another
jiyūwaza	free technique	freestyle practice without preset attack or response
jō	staff	typically 128cm oak staff
jō dori	staff taking	disarming an opponent's jō attack

jō nage	staff throw	using the jō to execute throwing techniques
jōdan	upper level	high-level target area (head)
kaeshiwaza	reversal techniques	counters to another's technique
ken	sword	bokken' or 'bokkto' wooden sword using in training
ken awase	sword blending	paired sword exercise for timing and distance
ken suburi	basic sword movements	fundamental solo bokken exercises
kentaijō	sword versus staff	paired ken–jō practice
kihon	basics	fundamental or essential principles
kihon dōsa	basic movements	standardized body movement exercises
kimusubi no tachi	sword of ki connection	advanced sword form emphasizing blending
kokyū dōsa	breath movement	seated exercise coordinating breath and posture
kokyū hō	breath method	practice harmonizing breathing and movement
kumijō	paired staff	partnered jō kata
kumitachi	paired sword	partnered bokken kata
kyū	grade	rank below black belt such as ikkyū
ma ai	distance	correct distance and timing between partners

nagare	flow	smooth, continuous execution of a technique
nagewaza	throwing techniques	shihōnage, iriminage etc.
ninindori	two-person attack	defending against two attackers
omote	front	the entering or forward version of a technique
suburi	basic weapon movements	solo cutting or swinging exercises for ken an jo
suwariwaza	seated techniques	techniques performed from kneeling position
tachidori	sword taking	disarming a sword attack
tachiwaza	standing techniques	techniques performed from standing
tai no henko	body change	basic turning movement aligning with uke's attack
tai sabaki	body movement	stepping and turning to blend or evade
tantō	knife	typically wooden training knife
tantōdori	knife taking	disarming an attacker with a tantō
ura	rear	the turning or circular version of a technique
ushiro	rear	indicates an attack from behind

Jō Suburi

#	name	description
1	choku tsuki	direct thrust
2	kaeshi tsuki	counter (return) thrust
3	ushiro tsuki	rear thrust
4	tsuki gedan gaeshi	thrust with low counter
5	tsuki jōdan gaeshi uchi	thrust, high counter strike
6	shōmen uchikomi	overhead strike (stepping)
7	renzoku uchikomi	continuous strikes
8	menuchi gedan gaeshi	head strike, low counter
9	menuchi ushiro tsuki	head strike, rear thrust
10	gyaku yokomen ushiro tsuki	reverse side-head strike, rear thrust
11	katate gedan gaeshi	one-handed low counter
12	katate tōma uchi	one-handed long-distance strike
13	katate hachi no ji gaeshi	one-handed figure-eight counter
14	hassō gaeshi uchi	figure-eight counter, strike
15	hassō gaeshi tsuki	figure-eight counter, thrust
16	hassō gaeshi ushiro tsuki	figure-eight counter, rear thrust
17	hassō gaeshi ushiro uchi	figure-eight counter, rear strike
18	hassō gaeshi ushiro barai	figure-eight counter, rear sweep
19	hidari nagare gaeshi uchi	left flowing counter, strike
20	migi nagare gaeshi tsuki	right flowing counter, thrust

Ken Suburi

#	name	description
1	ichi no suburi	single straight vertical strike (shomenuchi)
2	ni no suburi	step back to jodan no kamae, step in and strike
3	san no suburi	step back to waki no kamae, step in and strike with large kiai
4	yon no suburi	step forward with a shomenuchi strike, repeat
5	go no suburi	step forward while guarding, then a yokomenuchi strike, repeat
6	roku no suburi	from jodan no kamae, stepping yokomenuchi strike, thrust on the same side, repeat
7	shichi no suburi	from jodan no kamae, stepping yokomenuchi strike (right); step again to thrust (left)